

How to help when things get tough



About **5%** of Australian adults experience severe problems caused by excessive gambling with a flow-on effect on their partners and families.

Studies show that only a small number of people experiencing gambling harm seek formal help. Seeking help is often a last resort.

What do we know about how gamblers seek help?

- People experiencing gambling harm may have been struggling to control their gambling for years before they are motivated to talk to someone who can help.
- Rates of seeking help from gambling support services are low. This can be because of the stigma surrounding gambling harm, and feelings of guilt and shame. People may also be in denial of the harm their gambling is causing.
- Some people experiencing difficulties with gambling address the issues themselves.
- Others find help with family and friends, or through online information and resources.

What should I do? How can I help?

- Anyone in the community can provide information about counselling and self-help resources offered by Gambling Help. These resources include guidance about setting goals and finding circuit breakers to help curb gambling urges. Equip yourself with knowledge about “what’s out there” to help you respond.
- Talking about gambling can be very hard for people struggling with this issue. Shame and the stigma of gambling harm mean communication must be done with care and sensitivity.

- Use non-judgemental communication. Rather than providing advice, listen and help people identify and implement their own solutions.
- Be aware that people experiencing gambling harm often find a way to stop gambling or get it under control. This may involve removing or reducing the stresses that contributed to the gambling in the first place.
- People who are experiencing gambling harm can be helped by:
 - ✓ the encouraging support of friends and family
 - ✓ professional services
 - ✓ sometimes, being excluded from gambling venues.

When having the conversation, do:

- Without blaming, tell the person how their gambling might be affecting others
- Focus on positives and fixes rather than the problems themselves
- Get them to talk about what might be good about gambling less
- Let them know you’re asking because you care about them
- Use the words they use
- Ask them, “How bad do things have to get?”
- Be patient. This is a process that can take weeks or months.

How to help when things get tough continued

When having the conversation, avoid:

- Blaming the person for causing problems for others
- Labelling them as a problem
- Lecturing: if you keep chipping away at someone, they won't hear you
- Telling the person what you would do, unless you've overcome addiction yourself
- Telling them what to do. Instead, come to a solution together.

Conversation tips

- Listen to what the person has to say
- Encourage them to act by helping themselves, working on it together, peer support or treatment (Self-help strategies and peer support are more appropriate for people with less severe gambling issues, but they can work)

- Ask about potential difficulties with managing money
- Encourage them to take up alternative activities they enjoy, away from gambling
- Help with peer connection (if appropriate)
- Provide information about support options such as:
 - [Gambling Help Online Forum](#)
 - [Online support](#)
 - [Live chat](#)
 - [Phone support - 24-hour helpline](#)
 - [Phone counselling](#)
 - [Face-to-face counselling](#)

If they don't want to talk

- If the person does not want to talk about it, you can tell them that gambling help is available and that you are willing to talk when they are ready
- If the conversation becomes unproductive or aggressive, you should end the discussion and try again at another time
- Let them know you will be ready to help them when they are ready to change their behaviour
- Interventions should be a last resort. If this is required, do it in a way that helps the person feel supported and cared for rather than punished or shamed.

